

HISTORY AND MODERNITY OF “AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE”

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Abstract

Agence France-Presse (AFP) is an international French news agency located in Paris. It is the oldest and largest news agency in the world. It is one of four most outstanding agencies together with “Associate Press”, “Reuters” and “Itar-Tass”. Information agencies originated from 1835 when a young French writer and translator Charles-Louis Havas established Agency Havas on the basis of which was established one of the greatest agencies France-Presse. A lot of issues were changed in the strategy of the Agency from the day of its foundation, but in XXI century, the epoch of modern technologies, it faced new challenges and accomplished changes in the sphere of its activities. Top management of Agence France-Presse managed to implement new technologies and become one of the most prestigious agencies in the world.

Keywords: Agency; Technologies; Media, News; Information

Introduction

Agence France-Presse (AFP) is an international French news agency located in Paris. It is the oldest and largest news agency in the world. It is one of four most outstanding agencies together with “Associate Press”, “Reuters” and “Itar-Tass”.

Information agencies originated from 1835 when a young French writer and translator Charles-Louis Havas established Agency Havas. As he felt that interest in international affairs grew among the society of that period (mainly among the representatives of authorities and tradesmen), he quite often translated information from abroad for the French national press. So, in 1825, he established his own company to carry out such work. It was ten years later when he already founded multinational advertising and public relations company “Agency Havas” and provided foreigners with news about France.

Namely Havas inspired his former employees Bernard Wolff and Paul Reuter to follow his steps and establish two other news agencies. In order to reduce overhead and develop the lucrative advertising side of the business, Havas's sons, who had succeeded him in 1852, signed agreements with Reuter and Wolff, giving each news agency an exclusive reporting zone in different parts of Europe. This arrangement lasted until the 1930s, when the invention of short-wave wireless improved and cut communications costs. To help Havas extend the scope of its reporting at a time of great international tension, the French government financed up to 47% of its investments.

Charles-Louis Havas died in Bougival in 1858. He is regarded as a pioneer in the area of advertising.

In 1879, Havas Agency turned into joint-stock company where advertising and news departments functioned independently. The Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency comes namely from “Havas”.

Activates of Agence France-Presse

In XX century, when new technologies were introduced, the strategy of news was significantly changed. In 1982, the agency began to decentralize its editorial decision-making by setting up the first of its five autonomous regional centres in Hong Kong, then a British Crown colony. Each region has its own budget, administrative director and chief editor.

In the 90s of XX century, media researchers made prognosis that in the beginning of XXI century mobile telephones would predominate in the sphere of transmitting and spreading information. The Agence France-Presse made significant steps to develop this service. In December of 1999, the Agency signed the agreement with “Nokia” – the world's leading mobile phone supplier and a leading supplier of mobile and fixed telecom networks. The Agency started to spread financial, political, economic, sport and other kinds of news in English, French, Portuguese, German and Spanish languages through Internet. A bit later, the Agency started to improve technologies and targeted new markets, such as the satellite broadcasting market with subsidiary PolyCom, a joint venture with France Telecom and the Bourse of Paris.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Agence France-Presse entered the new century, it still remains as a government-chartered public corporation and is controlled by the French government, along with a number of its top media clients. The new General Director Eric Giuily, who was appointed on this position in 1999, offered the Parliament to make amendments in the legislation concerning AFP. He wanted to attract more investors and the company be oriented to news in the English language. The proposal was objected by the journalists working in the company. They made Giuily withdraw this proposal.

According to the law of 1957, the Agence France-Presse is public corporation though today it is independent from the France Government. The Agency is administered by the Director and the Board which consists of 15 persons. Among them are 8 members from French Press, 2 members are France-Presse personnel, 2 of them are from the state TV and radio and 3 are state representatives. The first one of the state representatives is nominated by the Prime Minister, the second one – by the Minister of Finance and the third – by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

France-Presse Foundation was established in 2007 which aimed at developing journalism standards throughout the world. The main goal of the Foundation is to prepare journalists of developing countries who will be able to present the most important economic, social and other processes ongoing in their country. One more aim of the Foundation is to raise journalists' awareness what will enable them to identify and report problems their country is facing, such as struggle against poverty, environment protection, lack of available education and employment, etc.

The Foundation also has an attempt to develop Internet Media and multimedia eastern and African journalists to keep up with technological development and become more flexible. In September of 2011, France-Presse assisted Uganda radio, press and television to establish new website.

Alongside with Board, the main managing team consists of three persons:

1. Emmanuel Hoog who is the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Agency France-Presse;
2. Rémi Tomaszewski – Managing Director;
3. Michèle Léridon – Global News Director.

Emmanuel Hoog

Emmanuel Hoog came to the top management of the Agency on April 15, 2009. It was the period when his predecessor was trying to turn France-Presse into state company. Mr. Hoog was against this plan. He suggested that it would be better the terms of Chairman's

authority to last for five years and openly proposed for it. He also wanted to change the composition of the Agency Board of Trustees where press representatives would dominate. Meanwhile he had a desire to specify documentally the relationship existing between the Agence France-Presse and the establishment of France.

Hoog decided to change the economic model of the Agency and significantly increase the number of video reporting during two years. According to the data of September of 2012, the France-Presse was named as the first Agency in the world that provides the audience with high class video reporting. The same year, Hoog created the Agency facebook page.

Hoog also decided to extend the borders of the Agency's activities. He wanted the Agency to comprise African countries, Brazil and India. Besides, he planned the broadcasting to be in Arabic language. Why did he decide on Asia and African regions? He proceeded from the fact that the democracy level was rather low in these countries and media did not seem to be objective. He wished competent and high professional journalists of these countries to provide the audience with real and objective news.

On December 16, in 2010, Emanuel Hoog was elected on the position of Chairman and Chief Executive for the second time.

The System of Values

The personnel of France-Presse are distinguished for professionalism and objectivity who permanently protect the standards of values. Namely because of professionalism the Agency became one of the greatest media magnet in the world. All principles and obligations of the Agency which should be and are strictly followed are placed on the website. These are:

- Truth
- Trust
- Unbiasedness
- Pluralism
- Operability
- Quality
- Objectivity

Prizes and Awards

- Javier Manzano is a freelance photographer for AFP. In 2013, he won the Pulitzer Prize for feature photography. He was awarded this prize for his extraordinary picture, distributed by Agence France-Presse, of two Syrian rebel soldiers tensely guarding their position as beams of light stream through bullet holes in a nearby metal wall.
- On October 14, 2013, journalists of France-Presse were awarded the prize for reporting the Syrian conflict.
- On July 2, 2013, AFP photographer Adrian Dennis won photograph of the year at the press photographer's 2013 competition for his striking image of Thai rider Nina Lamsan Ligon and her horse at the London Olympics. He also won the Sports Folio of the Year and Olympic Folio categories in the competition that rewards the best photographs in the British media.
- On March 14, 2011, Emmanuel Duparcq won the Albert Londres prize for the information and articles about Pakistan and Afghanistan which he published during one year.
- On April 17, 2012, AFP photograph Massoud Hossaini won the prize, one of the most prestigious in journalism, for his picture of a girl screaming in the aftermath of a suicide attack in Kabul in December of 2011.

Innovation

Nowadays, nobody is surprised with technological novelties used in media, but everything this initially was introduced and used namely by the Agence France-Presse. The project AFP MEDIALAB implemented by the Agency is regarded as the greatest novelty. It aims at spreading news among the audience. The provided information should be trustful, objective and unbiased.

AFP MEDIALAB was established in 2000. Its goal was to develop multimedia centre. Nowadays, its primary objective is to study and analyze new structures and technologies, be more flexible for spreading information, implement excellent media management, be attractive visually and interactive. It is possible to find out the work and activities of AFP MEDIALAB in mobile phones, iPad, iPod and other new technologies.

AFP in Figures

- 200 offices are spread in 150 countries of the world;
- 2600 persons work at Agence France-Presse;
- Among them 80 persons are of different ethnicity.

Everyday Life of AFP

- 5000 stories, 1250 among them are illustrated;
- 3000 photos;
- 200 videos;
- 100 graphic designs.

The Agency transmits information in six languages. They are: French, English, German, Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese. It is very important that sites are made in these languages. The information is identical everywhere and every person knowing these languages can obtain it.

Conclusion

In modern reality, Internet Media and TV are most popular and more emphasis is made on them. The media segment that has great history and huge important in modernity – media agencies “Agence France-Presse”, “Associate Press”, “Reuters” and “Itar-Tass” remain without the proper attention. On the example of Agence France-Presse we can conclude that information agencies that originated from XIX century changed their information strategy time after time and in XXI century, the epoch of modern technologies, they faced new challenges and accomplished changes in the sphere of their activities. Top management of Agence France-Presse managed to implement new technologies and become one of the most prestigious agencies in the world.

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